



\*\*\*\*\*NEWS RELEASE\*\*\*\*\*

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## CONGRESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY LEADERS RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR ROLES IN OCEAN PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION

(Washington, DC) A veritable “Who’s Who” of the Ocean world will be on hand as the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation presents its First Annual Leadership Awards to U.S. **Senator Ernest F. Hollings** (D-SC) and U.S. **Representative Jim Saxton** (R-NJ) on June 10<sup>th</sup> as part of Capitol Hill Oceans Week. The Award recognizes their long-term contributions to ocean protection and preservation, specifically for their introduction of the Oceans Act of 2000 in their respective chambers of Congress. The Oceans Act established the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, which is currently preparing its recommendations to Congress about future ocean policy.

Special guests include Admiral **James Watkins, USN (Ret.)**, Chair of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy; **Samuel W. Bodman**, Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Commerce; as well as several Members of Congress, including tribute speakers U.S. **Senator Daniel K. Inouye** and U.S. **Congressman Wayne Gilchrest**. The awards will be presented by National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Trustees **Dr. Robert Ballard and Jean-Michel Cousteau**. Actress, spokesperson and diver **Lauren Hutton** will serve as the Master of Ceremonies.

**Senator Hollings**, who authored, introduced and pushed for passage of the Oceans Act of 2000, has been among the most vocal of ocean advocates during his 36 years in Congress. Early in his Senate career, Hollings championed the creation of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); and in 1972, he wrote and was responsible for enacting the Coastal Zone Management Act, the nation’s first law designed to promote responsible coastal management. Hollings also authored and steered through Congress the Marine Mammal Protection Act and fought for passage of the Ocean Dumping Act, the Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and the 1996 Sustainable Fisheries Act. Currently, he is advancing his Coastal and Estuarine Land Protection Act, which he introduced in April. In addition, he continues efforts to bolster ocean research and its applications to human health.

“With ever increasing demands on the nation's oceans and coasts, we have much work to do to ensure the sustained protection of these precious resources. Big changes are coming to all of our coastal communities and we must make some careful and smart decisions if we want to keep the very resources we depend on,” **said Senator Hollings, Ranking Member of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee**. “I am deeply honored to receive recognition from the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, and I look forward to working with the Foundation as we address the many challenges facing our oceans and coasts.”

**Congressman Saxton’s** district in New Jersey includes more than 35 miles of shoreline, barrier islands, three bays and estuaries. Since he was first elected in 1985, Saxton has strived for clean water, clean air, coastal protection, wildlife protection and open space, establishing him as a leading conservationist in the Congress. As both a Chair and Senior Member of the Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans Subcommittee, he has actively fought for sensible fisheries management and sponsored legislation banning sludge dumping off the Atlantic Coast, as well as bills that protect marine mammals, domestic coral reefs and marine sanctuaries.

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2-2-2 Leadership Awards

One of his greatest moments as a legislator and came when he introduced the Oceans Act of 2000, which created the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. "The Oceans Act is a great bipartisan effort that will ultimately lead us to the most comprehensive review of federal ocean policy in 30 years," said Congressman Saxton. "It will give us the information and perspective we need to properly manage and preserve our ocean and coastal resources. I am proud to have introduced the legislation in the House and to have seen it passed into law. And I am especially honored to accept the Leadership Award from the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation."

**The Foundation will also present its first Volunteer of the Year Awards** to Gordon Bennett of the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary in San Francisco, California, and Alan Brooks of the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary in Port Angeles, Washington. "It is an honor to participate in this important event," said **Master of Ceremonies Lauren Hutton**. "As a diver and ocean conservationist, I can truly appreciate the commitment of our congressional leaders at the national level and the value of volunteer efforts at the local level."

Bennett began volunteering for the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary in 1993 and has dedicated an astounding 2,000 hours to monitoring beaches, responding to oil spills, and investigating the impact of natural and manmade events on wildlife. Alan Brooks is serving his second year as Chairman of the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary's Advisory Council where he has distinguished himself as a passionate and tireless advocate of ocean habitats and marine life.

"The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation is delighted to have the opportunity to express its gratitude to these volunteers and members of Congress, whose enthusiasm and diligence have contributed so much to our National Marine Sanctuary Program and to ocean preservation in general," said **Lori Arguelles, NMSF Executive Director**.

**The NMSF Leadership Awards Dinner kicks off Capitol Hill Oceans Week, a two-day symposium on Capitol Hill, June 11-12.** Now in its third year, this symposium, coordinated by the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, has established itself as one of the most important events of the year for exchanging knowledge and ideas about ocean issues and policies. This year, representatives from government, private industry, nonprofits, and academia will focus on the latest discoveries and the future of 'Exploring Our Oceans' (Wednesday, June 11) and the challenges and solutions to 'Managing Our Marine Areas' (Thursday, June 12). Each panel discussion will begin with an overview from a Member of Congress. Exhibitors will join the symposium on **June 12<sup>th</sup> for the Ocean Technology Fair**, which will feature some of the most successful marine management and exploration programs in the country. Congressional co-hosts of CHOW 2003 include the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation; the House Committee on Resources; the House Committee on Science; and the House Oceans Caucus.

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation is the private sector, non-profit partner to the federally managed National Marine Sanctuary Program, part of the U.S. Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation works to complement the outreach and education efforts of the nationwide network of 13 marine sanctuaries. Stretching from the Flower Garden Banks in the Gulf of Mexico to Thunder Bay in the Great Lakes, and from the Hawaiian Islands to the Florida Keys, the National Marine Sanctuary Program covers approximately 18,000 square nautical miles.

**Media must schedule with Laurie Howell – see above. Also see more details at [www.nmsfocean.org](http://www.nmsfocean.org).**